

NAVIGATING CHANGE IN THE NEW YEAR

KEY POINTS

- Make 'managing change well' your New Year's resolution
- Navigate workplace change by managing perceptions
- Build staff resilience during times of change
- Prepare and support your staff to face change in the New Year

"Our ability to adapt is amazing. Our ability to change isn't quite as spectacular,"

Lisa Lutz, American author

The new year is typically a time of change and each year it seems as though the pace of change quickens and the scale of change becomes greater. 'Managing change well' is a worthy New Year's Resolution, and it's worth considering how we can better manage the process of change in the new year by:

- Acknowledging people will have positive and negative responses to workplace change
- Discovering ways to cope with change
- Focusing on workplace/ employee wellbeing at all stages of change

MANAGING CHANGE MEANS MANAGING PERCEPTIONS

When news is announced that 'change is on the way' at work, or once the rumour mill starts working overtime, some of the first thoughts that enter people's minds revolve around what they could lose as an outcome of any change:

- Am I going to lose my job?
- Will members of my team lose their jobs?
- Will I be demoted?
- How will the change impact on my future career direction?
- Will I still be able to 'control' my work?

- How will the purpose and meaning of my work change?

During workplace change, people can assume the change will lead to the worst possible outcome; this is called 'catastrophising' and for your staff the most significant potential negative outcome of change will be losing their jobs.

Of course not all workplace change leads to people losing their jobs! But, at times of change we can fall into 'perception traps' and can become convinced that the worst is about to befall us. The change management process should assist us to sidestep, negative thinking traps including:

- **All or nothing** People with this mindset believe 'change is always bad'. When people take an extreme view of impending change it can be difficult to shift perceptions, it can also lead to widespread uncertainty, apprehension and disapproval among staff
- **Magnifying/ minimising** People can respond to change by over-emphasising the negative/ positive features of the situation, while reducing the importance of positive/ negative features
- **Catastrophising** When people become convinced that change will lead to a negative outcome, they can 'catastrophise', which means exaggerating perceived negative impacts of change. An example of this is a comment in response to change: "This new approach means that we will never be able to deliver a great service for our clients in the future."

If our ability to change isn't spectacular, it seems likely that workplace change can impact on employee mental wellness, especially if this change is poorly managed. So, what does well-managed workplace change look like? In the workplace well-managed change:

- Has a clearly articulated vision/ direction
- Has precise goals, action plans and time lines
- Involves all staff
- Accounts for and addresses perceived losses
- Recognises and validates the impacts of change on individual members of staff

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BUILDING STAFF RESILIENCE TO NAVIGATE WORKPLACE CHANGE

We can successfully navigate workplace change by building our resilience:

- Resilience is the capacity to recover or 'bounce back' from difficulties, adversity, conflict and failure. Resilience can also refer to the ability to manage positive events including change, progress and increased responsibility

Developing resilience means that we can see change in a positive light. Resilient people navigate change by:

- Looking at things in a positive way
- Being optimistic about the future
- Accepting responsibility for their feelings and actions
- Dealing with change, pressure and stress constructively

PREPARING FOR AND NAVIGATING CHANGE

There are steps we can take to prepare for change and to improve our capacity for dealing with change:

- Learn as much as possible about the coming change/s
- Make a list of what you can influence and what you can't influence about the coming change/s
- Act on the things that you can influence
- Talk to others who have gone through similar change in their workplace to discover tips and tactics for managing this process

SHARING POSITIVE STORIES OF CHANGE

Your workplace isn't the first to face significant change and you have likely experienced major change initiatives at other workplaces. Many workplaces build employee wellness into their change strategies. You can share these positive stories of change with your colleagues to help minimise anxieties or concerns.

If your workplace is undergoing major change and you feel like you need support at this time, don't forget to contact Converge International. You can reach our Employee Assist counsellors by calling **1300 OUR EAP (1300 687 327)** anytime.

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